

THE

SANDMAN ♦ UNIVERSE

Lucifer



9

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MATURE
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I HAVE HUNTED ALL SORTS OF PREY,
FROM THE WILDEBEEST OF THE AFRICAN
SAVANNA TO THE APES AND SERPENTS
OF THE BRAZILIAN RAINFOREST.

NOW I HAD SET MY SIGHTS
ON STRANGER AND MORE
TERRIBLE QUARRY.

I HAD ACQUIRED THE BEAST AT
GREAT EXPENSE AND WAS ELATED
TO DISCOVER THAT IT WAS NO
MERE TAXIDERMIST'S TRICK--NO
MONKEY BODY STITCHED TO A
CROCODILE'S HEAD.

I HAD HEARD SUCH
CREATURES WERE
SENTIENT...A FEATURE
I'D ONLY HAD THE
PLEASURE OF
ENCOUNTERING IN
ONE BEAST I'D
HUNTED BEFORE.

BEFORE I MATCHED WITS WITH OTHERS,
I WISHED TO LEARN ALL I COULD FROM
THE SPECIMEN ABOUT HIS KIND--ABOUT
DEMONS FROM SATAN'S OWN PIT.

IMAGINE MY
DISAPPOINTMENT
WHEN I LEARNED
THAT HAD THIS DEMON
EVER POSSESSED
THE POWER OF
SPEECH, HE HAD
BEEN RENDERED
AN IDIOT BY SOME
GREAT TRAUMA.

SUBJECTED TO ANY
KIND OF COERCION--
ANY TORTURE--HE
WOULD MANAGE ONLY
THE SAME SINGLE
UTTERANCE THROUGH
HIS FOUL TEETH:

L-LUCIFER...

LUUUCIFER.

MY FRUSTRATION WAS UNPARALLELED.

THE MONSTER HAD BEEN BROUGHT TO ME IN SUCH DAMAGED CONDITION THAT IT WAS UNLIKELY TO MAKE GOOD SPORT EVEN IF UNLEASHED UPON THE GROUNDS.



OH, HOW I NOW WISH I HAD ALLOWED THE DOGS TO SAVAGE THE THING AND HAD BURIED IT IN A DITCH BEFORE HE CAME.

OH, HOW I WISH I HAD TURNED AWAY THE VAGRANT AT THE GATE AS I HAD INTENDED.



But Lord Fowler...you are Lord Fowler of this estate, are you not?

I believe we have a mutual acquaintance...

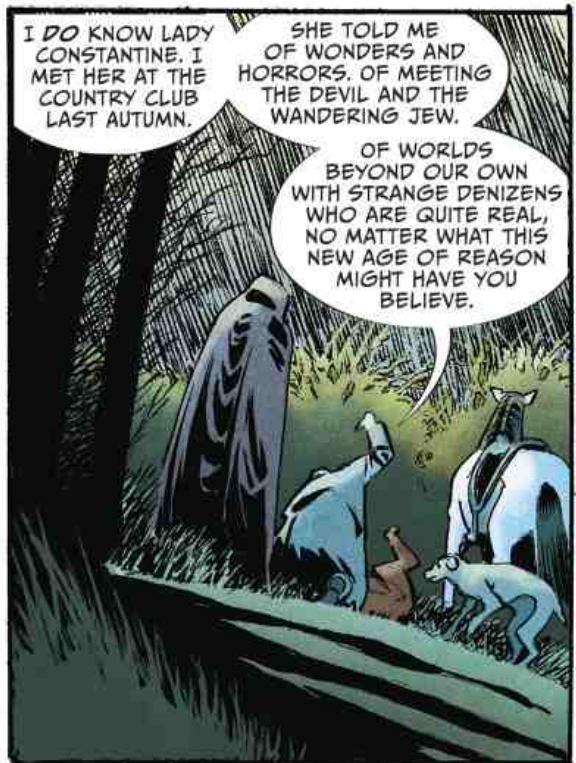
A Lady Johanna Constantine.



I DO KNOW LADY CONSTANTINE. I MET HER AT THE COUNTRY CLUB LAST AUTUMN.

SHE TOLD ME OF WONDERS AND HORRORS. OF MEETING THE DEVIL AND THE WANDERING JEW.

OF WORLDS BEYOND OUR OWN WITH STRANGE DENIZENS WHO ARE QUITE REAL, NO MATTER WHAT THIS NEW AGE OF REASON MIGHT HAVE YOU BELIEVE.

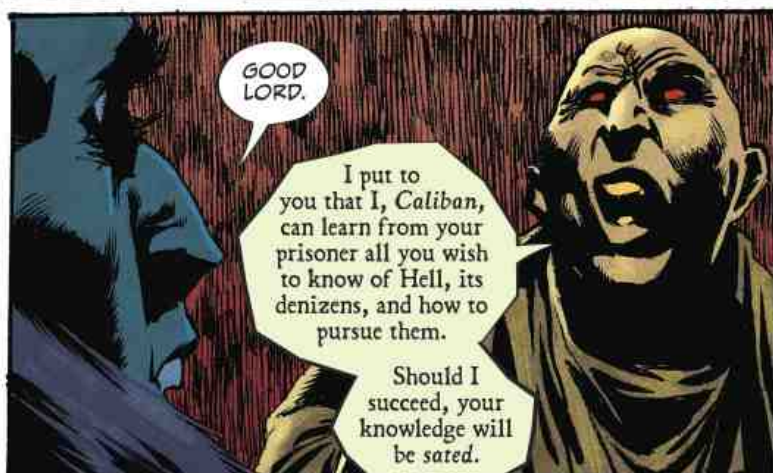
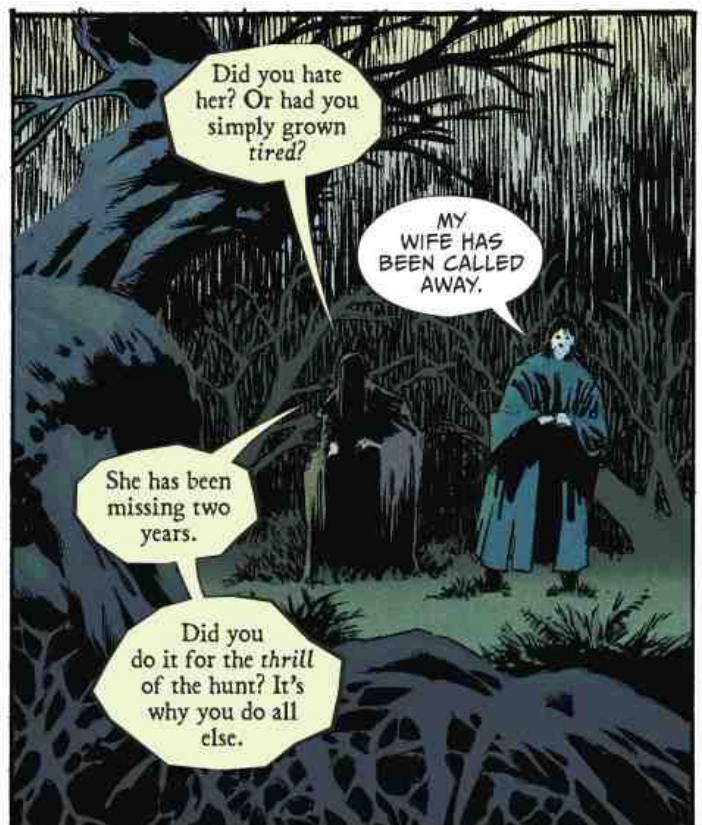


And you listened with great interest, I am told. For these, to you, were new things to kill.

WRONG.









WHAT MANNER
OF MONSTER
ARE YOU?

YOU MAKE A
SORRY EXCUSE FOR
A DEMON COMPARED
TO THE BEAST I HAVE
SHACKLED. BUT YOU
ARE NO MAN EITHER,
ARE YOU?

That is
what I wish
to discover.

And it is
why I must,
myself, travel
to Hell.



I seek an
audience with
Satan.

LUUUUCIFER.



Yes. Oh, look at you. Do
you know him?

LUUUUUUCIFEEER...

My mother
told me he is my
father. But she
often lied.



YOU KNOW, IN ANCIENT GREECE,
IT WAS COMMON PRACTICE FOR
UNCHASTE WOMEN WHO BORE
BASTARDS TO **CLAIM** THAT
THEY HAD BEEN **RAPED**
BY **ZEUS**.

THEY WOULD
TELL THEIR SONS
THIS SO THAT THEY
WOULD THINK THEY
WERE OF **CELESTIAL**
LINEAGE...



...RATHER THAN
THE TRUTH. THAT THEY
WERE **WORTHLESS**,
UNWANTED
CHILDREN.



YOU WILL GET **NOTHING** FROM IT BEYOND THE ONE WORD IT CROAKS. BUT MY SERVANTS SHALL ASSIST YOU TO--

No. You must send them all away. And you must leave the house, too. I need room to work.



DO NOT SEEK TO GIVE ME ORDERS. I HUMOR YOU IN THIS ONLY FOR IT **AMUSES** ME TO DO SO.

I WILL RETURN TO MY HUNT ON THE GROUNDS UNTIL **SUNDOWN**. DO AS THOU WILT WITH IT UNTIL THEN.

IF YOU TRY TO FLEE I WILL **SEE** YOU, AND SO WILL THE DOGS...



...AND THEY **WILL** TEAR YOU VERY MUCH ASUNDER.



I'VE ALREADY INTRODUCED THEM TO THIS BEAST, SO NOW THEY HAVE THE TASTE TO HUNT BOTH HUMAN **AND** DEMON FLESH.



MY WIFE, BY THE BY, WAS A SURPRISINGLY **FAST** RUNNER...

...BEFORE SHE WAS CALLED AWAY.

MY EVENING'S HUNT
WAS HALF-HEARTED
AND TEPID-BLOODED.

EVEN THE DOGS SEEMED BORED
OF CHASING DOE, AS THOUGH THEY
SENSED THE RICHER QUARRY THAT
LURKED IN THEIR FUTURE.

GET.
GET!

DUMB
BEASTS!



Lord Fowler.
How was your
hunt?

DISMAL. I'LL
ADMIT, I WAS
DISTRACTED THE
ENTIRE TIME BY
ANTICIPATION.

WHAT
HAVE YOU
LEARNED?



You
must be
famished.



NOW, LOOK HERE.
NO MORE GAMES. IF YOU
HAVE FAILED TO DRAW ANY
KNOWLEDGE FROM THE
DEMON, YOUR LIFE
IS FORFEIT.

I HAVE
NO QUALMS
ON ACCOUNT OF
MURDER. YOU
ARE NO TRUE
MAN.



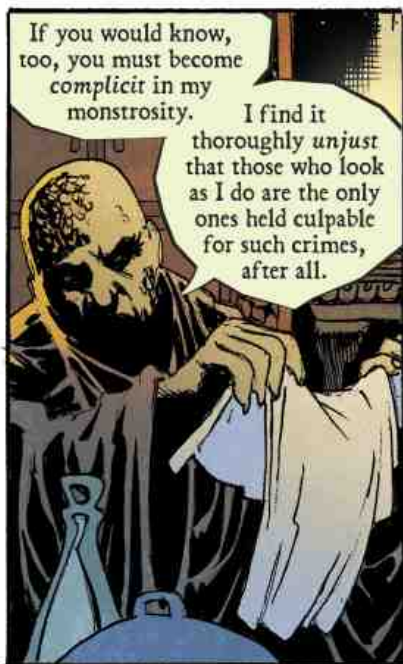
I have learned
much, Lord Fowler.
Or rather, I am just
about to. But
first...





WHAT ON EARTH IS THIS? WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

In order to learn about this being--and of the one I seek--I have had to become monstrous.



If you would know, too, you must become complicit in my monstrosity.

I find it thoroughly unjust that those who look as I do are the only ones held culpable for such crimes, after all.



I have prepared many courses. Nothing has gone to waste.

Break bread with me and learn. If you have the constitution.

I WILL NOT BE ACCUSED OF COWARDICE, CALIBAN.



We shall move from the outside in. First course...



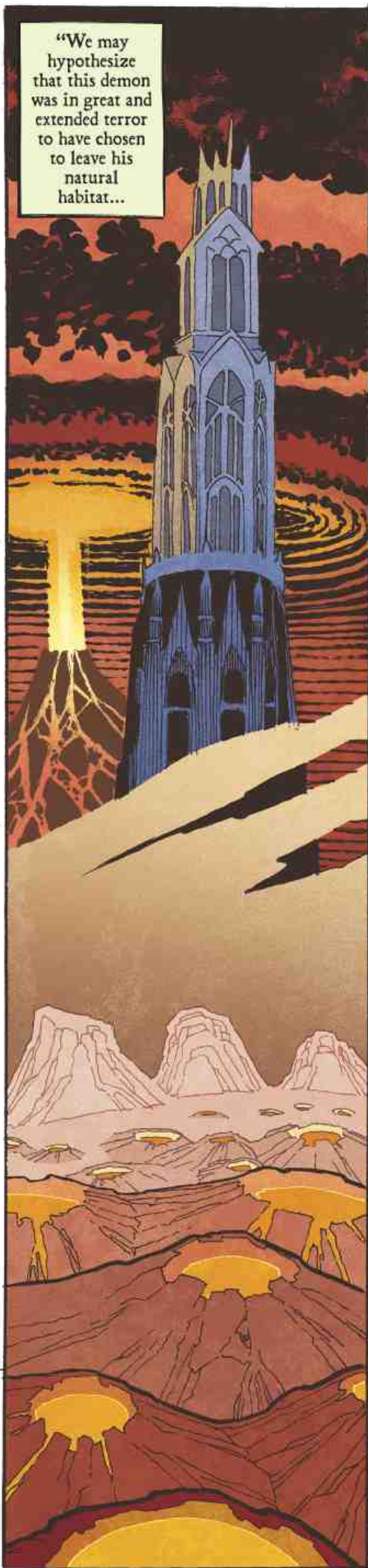
Demon tartare, with a scale crackling.

You'll be pleased to learn the egg is a hen's.



Note how the meat is tough and grisly. That's fear causing the nerves to contract...

"We may hypothesize that this demon was in great and extended terror to have chosen to leave his natural habitat..."



"...To risk escape to the world of the living.



"Perhaps he was being pursued...perhaps he had angered some being more powerful by far than himself.

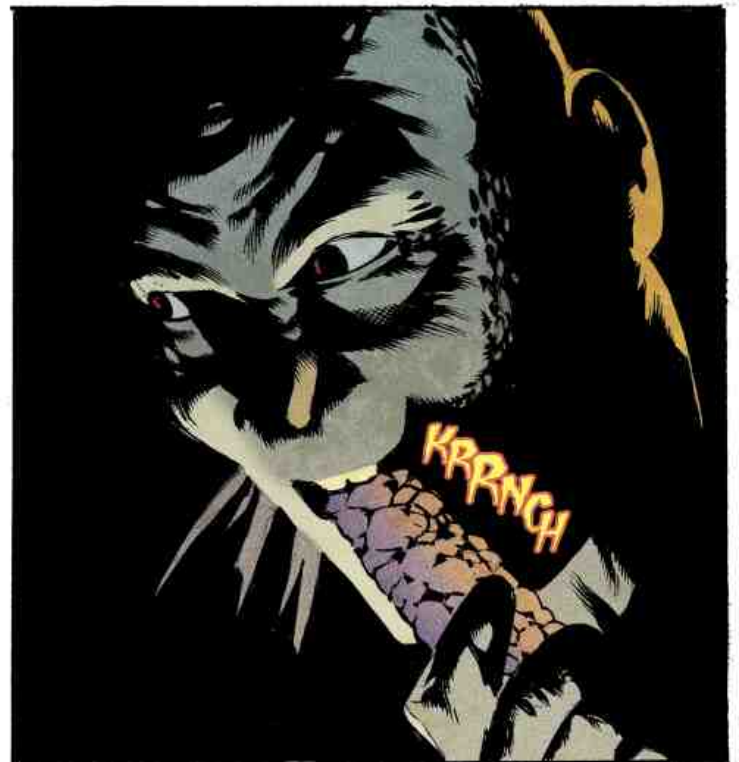


"Perhaps we might deduce which being this might have been from his repeated refrain."



L-LUCIFER...
WHAT HAVE I
DONE?







"By the taste of it, I'd reckon the gland has more to do with infection, and the battling of such things."

"Traces remain."

"So many infections. Smallpox, consumption... a touch of the Great Plague."

"But if the damned are not embodied in flesh, these diseases must stem from elsewhere."

"From inside themselves, perhaps."

"They stew in their souls' own putrescence."



What disease would show on the surface of your murderous soul, I wonder, Lord Fowler?

HNNH--
W-WHA?!



A-AGH!
AH--

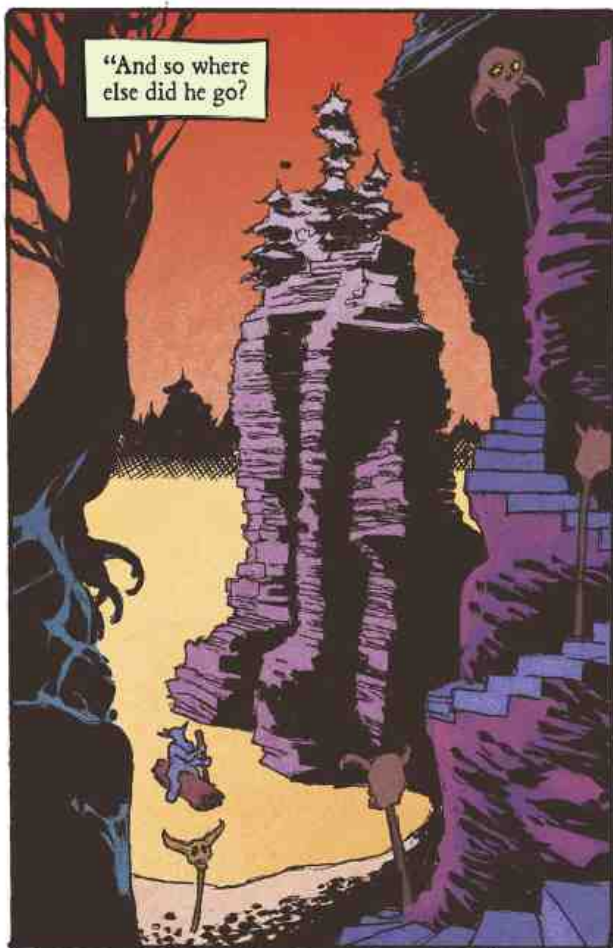


OH!
HAHA.

A TRICK
OF THE
LIGHT.

Light oft
plays cruel
tricks, it is
true...









"Where would he have encountered such a being, I wonder. Perhaps he..."

"HUUUUUUURTING. HUUUUUUURTING!"



HUUUUUURTING...

Do not interrupt me, Fowler. I am close now to finding my way to Hell. To my father. I can feel it.

NU-NUH MEE.

SUMTHIN... STUCK IN MUH THROAH...

A-A-AGH...

Wood? Where does wood grow in Hell?



D-DANTE.

What?



DANTE WROTE OF HELL'S WOOD OF SUICIDES. WHERE HARPIES TEAR AT THE BARK OF THE TREES... FOR THE TREES THEMSELVES--

HUUUUUURTING

--ARE THE SOULS OF THE DAMNED. OF THOSE WHO'VE TAKEN THEIR OWN LIVES.



So. A stowaway from Hell, are we?

JUST A SPLINTER. JUST A FRAGMENT OF A SOUL



JUST ENOUGH TO REMIND THE REST OF ME DOWN IN HELL HOW FRESH THE AIR IS ABOVE

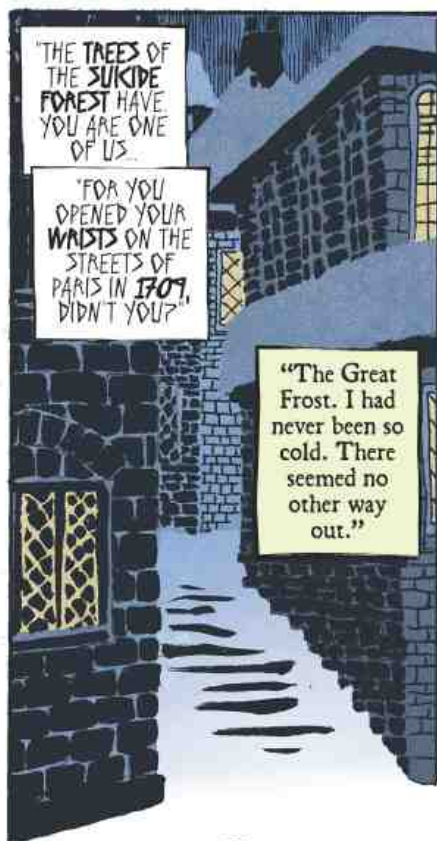
ENOUGH TO COMPOUND THE HUUUURTING.

BUT YOU I KNOW YOU, CALIBAN.

What? How can you?

WE HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU.

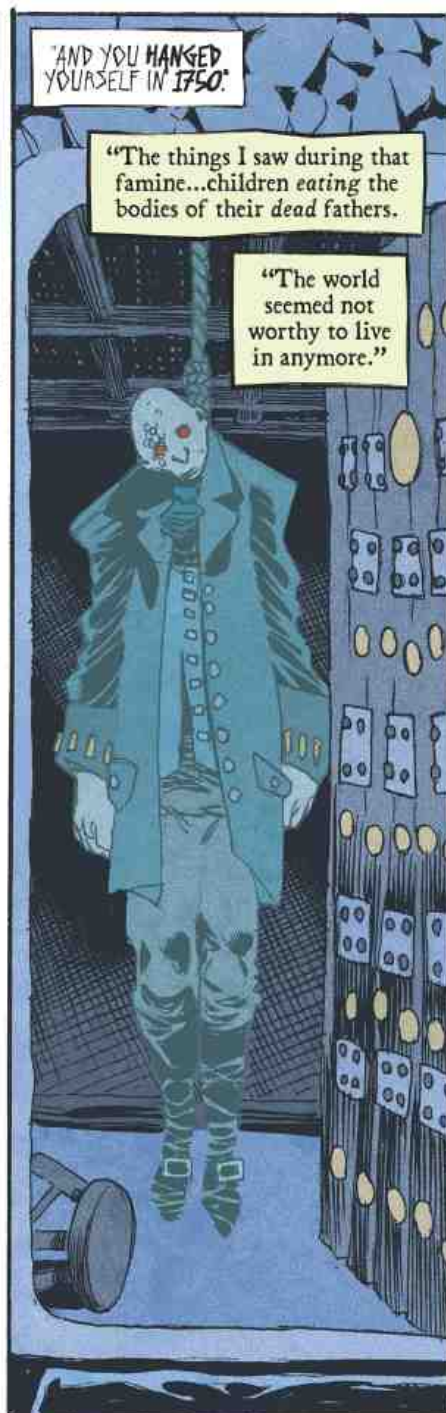
Hell has?



"THE TREES OF THE SUICIDE FOREST HAVE YOU ARE ONE OF US."

"FOR YOU OPENED YOUR WRISTS ON THE STREETS OF PARIS IN 1709, DIDN'T YOU?"

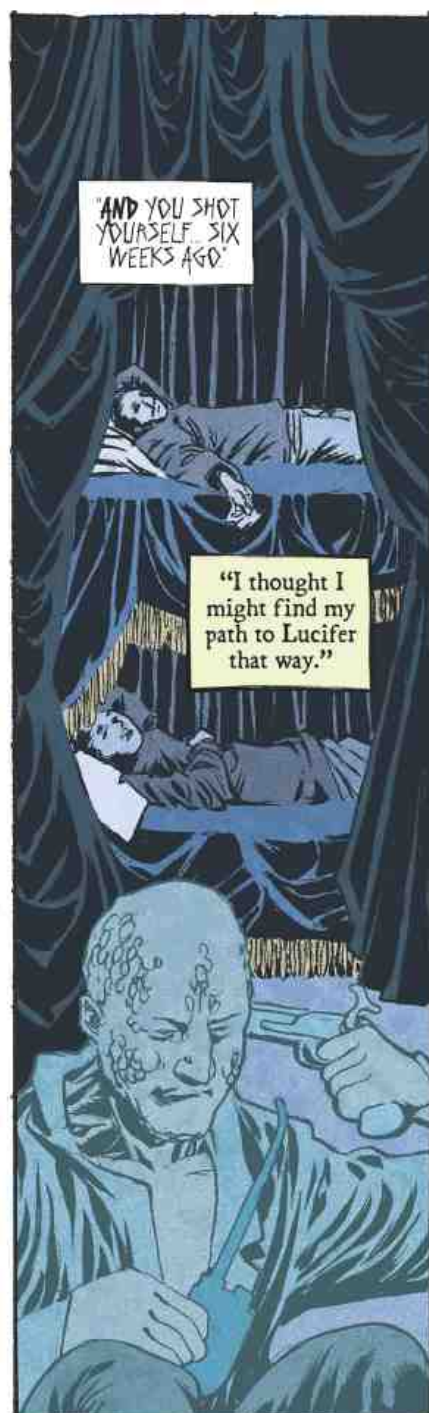
"The Great Frost. I had never been so cold. There seemed no other way out."



"AND YOU HANGED YOURSELF IN 1750."

"The things I saw during that famine...children eating the bodies of their dead fathers."

"The world seemed not worthy to live in anymore."



"AND YOU SHOT YOURSELF SIX WEEKS AGO."

"I thought I might find my path to Lucifer that way."



YOU SEE? YOU ARE ONE OF US CALIBAN. AND WHEN YOU ENTER HELL, AS YOU SAY YOU WISH, YOU SHALL BE **ROOTED** IN AMONGST US.

TORN BY HARRIES
HUUUUUURTING.

N-no.
That is not how
I mean to visit
Hell.



IT'S WHERE
YOU'LL FIND
YOURSELF IF
YOU DO.

But I never
did kill myself.
I failed each time.
Do you know how
painful it is to
wake at the end of
the noose?

Or how
ice cold it feels
to wake in a lake
of your own blood,
with little left in
your veins?



YOU DIED
EACH TIME YOU
THREATENED TO SPROUT.
BUT HE WOULD NOT
ALLOW IT. WOULD SEND
YOU **BACK** HERE. WOULD
SEND YOU BACK
HUUUUUURTING.

HAHAHA!



DON'T YOU
SEE WHAT HAS
--BRRP--
HAPPENED,
CALIBAN?

YOU
CANNOT GO TO
HELL--THE DEVIL
HIMSELF HAS
REJECTED
YOU!



MY COMPLIMENTS,
BY THE WAY. THESE
BAKED CLAWS ARE
DELICIOUS. TO PAIR
THEM WITH APPLE
WAS **GENIUS**.

BUT LOOK HOW
SCARRED THEY ARE.
HOW **RIPPED** AND
TORN, BEFORE THEY
EVEN FEEL MY
FORK...

"...HE MUST HAVE
FACED SOME GREAT
CHALLENGE TO
ESCAPE--HUC--."

THE
GNASHING
WALL...



GRAAH!



FEED
US!

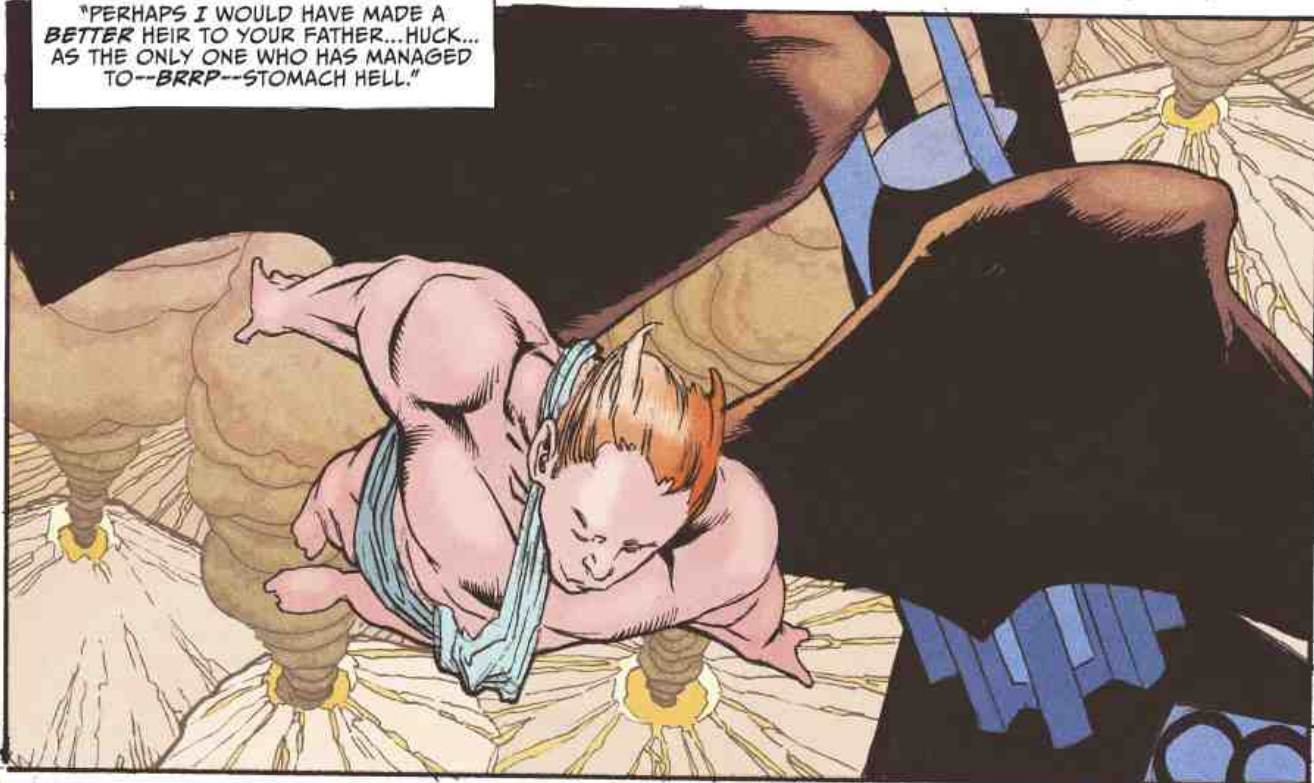


FEED
US ALL!

LET ME
CLIMB YOU! I
MUST GET OUT
OF HELL.



"PERHAPS I WOULD HAVE MADE A BETTER HEIR TO YOUR FATHER...HUCK... AS THE ONLY ONE WHO HAS MANAGED TO--BRRP--STOMACH HELL."



SOMEBODY HAS DAMAGED MY THRONE.



AND WHETHER I CALL FOR IT OR NOT, BEFORE TIME HAS PASSED IT WILL SIT THERE AGAIN, WHOLE AND FULL.

NOTHING TRULY CHANGES IN HELL.



I THINK... I AM GROWING TIRED OF THIS PLACE.

"If I cannot enter Hell, I'll wait for Lucifer here. I'll find him when he walks the Earth, one day."

"But I must say, Lord Fowler..."





End

Lucifer

"THE GASTRONOMY LESSON"

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NEXT ISSUE: THE PROBLEM WITH OLD BLOOD MAGIC

Lucifer scouts a worthy new afterlife, and a holy killjoy crashes Sycorax's sabbath on the eve of her death.

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SON OF ULTRON

"THIS FAN...
THIS MONSTER!"

